



Dear Councillor,

I hope this communication finds you well and here's wishing you a happy, healthy and positive 2023, especially after the surreal experiences of our recent Covid past.

I genuinely do not envy the decision you have to make at this month's Planning Committee. I fully appreciate that you sit and listen to planning deliberations monthly, but I believe **Tuesday 17th January 2023** will be a historic date.

If I could please beg your indulgence to read what I have to say in the next five minutes, I believe you will feel the time spent will have certainly been worthwhile.

Your own Council Officers are recommending that you approve planning permission for application **22/01122/FUL** and we all know they will have gone to great lengths to ensure that their 'Planning Application File' for such a recommendation will have ticked all of the usual due diligence boxes in case the decision is called into question at a later date.

Sad to say, their recommendation and due diligence is not a black and white matter, there are a significant number of grey areas and flexible parameters that will not stand up to reasonable scrutiny, certainly not in the long term.

There are two issues with this application:

- 1. The Facts – the actual planning permission conditions; and***
- 2. The Legacy – the consequences of such a momentous decision***

1. The Facts

I am a lay person and do not profess to know the granular detail of what surveys need to be performed, or measurements taken, but any sensible person who has walked Rheydt Avenue on a weekday evening, or during the day on a weekend, will agree that the road cannot physically cope with the current traffic use. It is too narrow and experts agree that it cannot be sufficiently widened because of the water course that runs parallel. Yet the Planners will have us believe that a road that can only have pavement to one side, is fit for purpose to access a housing development of over 215 residences. How?

The images in this article clearly show the issues on a typical Sunday morning last November, whereby Rheydt Avenue regularly becomes single lane...

<https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/wallsend-boys-club-petition-homes-25601517>

Rheydt Avenue is the only access road, which will make this development the largest cul-de-sac in North Tyneside, if not the North East of England.

<https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/wallsend-boys-club-council-tyneside-25951686>

Wallsend Boys Club began operating from Rheydt Avenue in October 2010 with 19 representative teams. We will end the 2022-23 season with more than 50. Over that same period, we have seen popular local leisure resources at Wallsend Sports Centre and Wallsend Golf Club decline to such an extent that the Sports Centre burnt down (and was never re-built!) and the Golf Club has lost virtually all of its members to other clubs around Tyneside.

The organisation that presided over this abject failure has not maintained the site and now wants to sell on its lease to a property developer at a massive profit and North Tyneside Council is eager to support this transaction for its own short term commercial benefit. Are you happy to endorse that chain of events?

The traffic issue is only going to get worse. There has been a growing demand for more access to football teams from Girls and Women over the last decade and this trend has multiplied after last year's success of The England Lionesses. By June 2023 we will be opening our **Youth Club and Community Hub** above our changing rooms. We confidently expect more people from the local area will want to access this facility during the day and many of our existing users may well want to stay on site longer. Whatever traffic survey deemed Rheydt Avenue currently fit for purpose, it cannot have considered the latent demand in our borough for more football teams and appropriate buildings where our young people can meet and socialise in a safe environment. It is more than interesting to note that Sport England believes NTC's *Playing Pitch Strategy* to be more than 5 years out of date!

2. The Legacy

Irrespective of the 'Planning Application File', the reason this application will not stand up to future scrutiny is because it will be viewed within the true context of how our Council valued the children in its borough on 17th January 2023. It will not make for good reading. At a time when North Tyneside has Wards ranked amongst the most deprived in the UK, when Child Obesity and Children's Mental Health are real and growing issues, our Council wants you to vote for more short-term council tax receipts over the long-term health and wellbeing of our children. Your children. Your grandchildren. Your great grandchildren. Are you happy putting your name to that legacy? If you are, I am wasting my time!

Many people outside of North Tyneside have heard of Wallsend Boys Club because we have had an unprecedented number of members go on to become professional footballers. However, the Club was founded in 1904 to effectively give the Apprentices of Swan Hunter Shipyard something positive to do in their leisure time and reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour; and essentially that is what we still do.

The fact that 92 boys have gone on to become professional footballers is a fact we are proud of, but we are far prouder of the fact that tens of thousands of members over the decades have simply used the Club to gain valuable life skills and engage in positive, healthy activities and build lifelong friendships.

To emphasise that point our strapline is **'more than football'** because the Club does so much more than give young people a game of football.



As just one example, we take our Under 13 Boys and Girls to Ypres in Belgium every year to play in *The Christmas Truce Tournament* with Belgian, French and German U13 teams.



We use the metaphor of the 1914 Christmas Truce to show our young people the power of football to bring a World War to a temporary halt and the true horror of war when they visit The Menin Gate for the Last Post ceremony and realise the 50,000 names inscribed of commonwealth soldiers missing in action is the equivalent of a full St James's Park.

Causes and effects are as relevant in 2023 as they were in 1904 (and 1914!). When the Meadow Well Riots happened in 1991, one of the key effects was to build The Parks sports centre in the same post code, so I don't think many would argue the fact that anti-social behaviour is reduced when young people have more positive distractions in their leisure time.

I know Northumbria Police and the NHS appreciate the valuable work we do within the borough – please see attached endorsement from the Police and Crime Commissioner – but sadly, more often than not, we wonder whether our own Council appreciates our efforts.

At another time you may want to ask your Council Officers why we are the only borough in the north east that is **NOT ELIGIBLE** to apply for a share of the **£368 million** from the Youth Investment Fund... <https://youthinvestmentfund.org.uk/>



We are on the front line in providing these positive distractions and need more space to deliver positive outcomes, not less, as we are still only *scratching the surface*. With your support we can do even more, but if financial support is not practical please do not be instrumental in curtailing the valuable work we already do.

Is the priority concrete, or children? Hopefully, you will choose our children.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. J. H.' with a stylized flourish below it.